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SUBJECT: POLL SHOWS ZUMA EMERGING AS TOP PRESIDENTIAL
CONTENDER

¶1. (U) ANC Deputy President Jacob Zuma came in first place when 2,000 adults were asked, "Who do you think will succeed President Mbeki in 2009?", according to a poll released by TNS Surveys on 25 October. Zuma came out heads above the others, receiving 27 percent of the vote. Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka came in a distant second with only ten percent of the vote. Filling out the top five were President Mbeki (who is constitutionally barred from seeking a third term) with eight percent, Cyril Ramaphosa with seven percent, and Tokyo Sexwale with six percent. Of the next five contenders, three were not even ANC members, indicating some respondents do not understand how the country chooses its President. Democratic Alliance (DA) Leader Helen Zille received four percent, Foreign Affairs Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma received three percent, and Finance Minister Trevor Manuel, Independent Democrats Leader Patricia de Lille, and former DA Leader Tony Leon each received two percent of the vote. Twenty-six percent of respondents did not know. Respondents were also asked, "Who would you like to succeed President Mbeki?" with almost identical responses.

¶2. (U) Thirty-eight percent of respondents agreed to the statement "South Africa will not be ready for a female President when President Thabo Mbeki steps down." This shows a slight warming to the idea. In September 2006, 48 percent of people agreed with the statement. Black males agreed most, with 47 percent, while only 33 percent of both black and white females agreed that the country is not ready.

¶3. (U) Though a quarter of those polled believe Zuma will become President, nearly half (48 percent) agreed that this would "bring disaster to South Africa." While significant, the number of respondents in 2006 who agreed with this statement was 58 percent. However, it is important to note that this sentiment was not shared equally among races. Indian or Asians were the most pessimistic with 81 percent of respondents agreeing that a Zuma presidency would be disastrous, 78 percent of coloured respondents felt it would be, and 69 percent of whites felt it would be. Only 33 percent of blacks agreed. Responses also varied dramatically between provinces, with Cape Town being the most pessimistic -- 73 percent of respondents felt SA would be worse off, while Durban was the least pessimistic with only 36 percent of inhabitants predicting disaster.

¶4. (U) TNS Surveys conducted the survey during face-to-face interviews in the first half of September. Respondents are from Gauteng province (Johannesburg, Soweto, East, South, and West Rand, Pretoria, and Vaal Triangle), Western Cape (Cape Town), KwaZulu-Natal (Durban), Eastern Cape (East London and Port Elizabeth), and Free State (Bloemfontein.) No polling was done in North West, Northern Cape, Mpumalanga, and

Limpopo provinces. The 2,000 respondents included 1,260 blacks, 385 whites, 240 coloureds, and 115 Indians/Asians.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: Mission cautions against drawing too many conclusions from this snapshot poll, especially in connection with the ANC party election in December. The poll likely reflects Zuma's political momentum, as much as the negative public criticism of Mbeki, in the past few weeks. However, South Africa's next President will be chosen by the ruling party in Parliament (inevitably the ANC) in 2009, not by the man on the street and definitely not by those who are not members of the ANC. In this sense, public opinion is less revealing in South Africa than in many other countries. END COMMENT.
BOST